

SATURDAY, JULY 10, 1869.

Subject: The Door.

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# PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

A Weekly Publication

OF

## SERMONS

PREACHED BY

### HENRY WARD BEECHER.



NEW-YORK:

J. B. FORD & CO., No. 39 PARK ROW.

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1869

Brooklyn, January, 1869.

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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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# THE DOOR.

SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 27, 1869.

“I AM the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out.”—JOHN x. 9.

DIFFERENT nations have styles of illustration peculiar to themselves. The Oriental, the Northern, and the Mediterranean nations have styles so different that one can scarcely ever be mistaken or confounded with regard to them. The Hebrew, among the Orientals, stood eminently peculiar. He knew how to employ in his speech the sublimest elements of nature, and, with equal boldness, how to employ, for the sublimest occasions, the homeliest and commonest figures. Who but such a one as Jesus would have dared liken himself to a hen? Yet that single act of the hen which is charming, was selected, and forever will be full of divine beauty.

Christ compares himself to a road; to a loaf of bread; to water; to a coat, or garment; to a house; and, in the passage from which we begin this discourse, to a *door*. And this habit of selecting familiar and homely objects, and using them in some of their relations or functions, to illustrate divine elements, is one of the peculiarities of Scripture.

In this instance, and in all others mentioned, if you attempt a literal and physical comparison, the figure will crumble under your hands, and turn to homeliness and dust. But if you consider the function of the object, or its special uses and associations, then the significance and beauty of the illustration will grow upon you the more you consider it.

That the Son of God should be called a governor, a prince, a king, seems congruous; but that he should be called a shepherd, a farmer, a vine-dresser, at first startles a little. If natural objects are selected—a mountain, a flame, the sun—how in them there is a fitness that satisfies expectation! But to select a door, seldom a thing of beauty, without impressiveness, a mere instrument of convenience—this may well startle one at first. And yet, upon further thought, there will come to mind one and another, and finally so many uses, that admiration will take the place of surprise.

A door is the emblem of separation, in one sense. Only the hand of the householder, or his appointed servants, may open it. Not all who pass it may lift the latch. On one side are strangers, excluded, kept out; on the other, the family, included and defended. On one side are the passions, the hunting business, the driving cares of the world; on the other, love and quietness.

The door is the separating instrument. It is the point in the wall where there may be exit or ingress. It is the point of defense for all that are within, and the point of separation for all that are without. It is the symbol, then, of the great fact of the cherished household, and of the great jostling world that is separated from it—to the one a refuge; to the other an exclusion.

The door is also the symbol of protection—if that is not already implied in the foregoing word. It gives security. It defends the weak and the innocent children. The things that are happening in the community roll up to the household, and, like a wave upon the beach, they break and pass away. And we can bring up our children, thanks be to the door, or the house, in the midst of pernicious examples, in the midst of temptations innumerable, safely and nobly and purely. It stands between them and the thief, and the rude assailant, and the mischievous interloper, and the man of pestiferous morals.

On the other hand, the door is the symbol of hospitality. To *keep an open door*, is equivalent to the declaration that one is princely in the use of his house, and employs it as an instrument of pleasure to others. A man is often said to put his house at the service of his neighbors and friends. But as the house is entered or used by reason of the door, we also say that his door is always open, meaning the same thing. But as the door itself can not be opened except by the latch, we say that the latch is always drawn, or that the *latch-string hangs out*. In primitive times, the latch was lifted by a string; whereas, now, it is lifted by a much more curious machinery. *The house* is employed for hospitality; and *the door*, which symbolizes the whole house, or *the latch*, which is the means of using the door, represents great acts of kindness.

At the door we take our farewells of children going out into life, with many tears, and many exhortations, and some fears, and many hopes. At the door we take leave of departing friends, who have cheered us for a while, and return to their several spheres of duty. At the door we bid farewell to guests who have honored our dwelling. There, too, the dead seem separated from us forever. So long as their forms lay silently within, they seemed yet ours, though the eye saw nothing, and the ear heard nothing, and the lip spoke nothing; but when once their feet had been borne through the door,

they were gone out forever, and the places that knew them should know them no more.

At the door, too, we greet the returning children, and meet and welcome the much-prized friends and guests. What sweet surprises have seized us there, as some dear face, unexpected, dawned through the door, like a star shining through the darkness! At the door we stand waiting for the messenger. The child is sick, and hastening onward. *Will he come? Will he come quickly?*

The maiden, with hospitable intent, lights to the door the now frequent visitor, and a gentle courage sustains her in such farewells as a moment before she would have shrunk from. The unsteady lamp goes out; and yet, never was twilight so bright, nor were inarticulate sounds ever so full of meaning.

Here, too, at the door, in the hot summer evening, sits the patriarch, and, in a group near by, the family; and familiar neighbors, passing by, stop and exchange kindly salutations. Friendliness prevails. The houses which are in winter close shut, now throw all their treasures forth. As trees and shrubs push out their buds into odorous blossoms, so in summer our sons and daughters blossom out, and we sit in hospitable publicity at our doors.

And so, if you consider what is the power of association, you will see that a door is not a mere wooden partition for mechanical uses, but that it is a witness and an instrument of the heart's choicest experience. The heart, after all, is the alabaster box of precious ointment, and whatever its affections touch, they fill with undying fragrance. The homeliest things, and the things most common, are by the heart redeemed from vulgarity, and sanctified to nobler uses. And because at the doorway so much happens in which the heart's deepest nature is concerned, the door itself becomes sanctified in association.

When our Saviour, therefore, called himself a door, no more significant symbol could well have been selected, either for variety, or for the sweetness, the beauty, and the usefulness of the truth which was meant.

The immediate reference is here had to the shepherd's door—the gate of the fold; as in the preceding verses, the Saviour has been speaking of his flock, and of himself as the Shepherd. But the application is not to be confined to that. The circumstances which made it fit in the humbler relation, give it a still more ample and nobler use in the wider and larger relation.

The central idea, then, is this: that Christ is that power through which the soul finds relief, protection, peace, gladness; that he is the Benefactor; that he is the Father; that he greets the going out and the returning; that he uses his heavenly power, and his heavenly mansion, and his own self, as a door is used, where, going out and

coming in, one has the full richness of the refined and loving household. He is the Way, and he is the Gate. These are familiar Scripture figures, both pointing to the same thing. Whoso enters by this living Door, shall find rest and safety. Every one on earth is seeking a home for his heart. The soul's home is behind and within this Door, Christ Jesus. For, wherever else we have some pleasure, some rest, some protection, nowhere else is there either rest, pleasure, or protection which misfortunes can not reach to, nor troubles destroy, except behind this Door, Christ Jesus, and within the circle of his household.

I shall lead your thoughts to this idea of the intimate relationship which Christ may sustain to the human soul, by following out this figure of Scripture in some of its familiar uses.

1. If there is a sound in the household sweeter than the opening and closing door of the house where love reigns, I do not know what it is. Much as we may be educated to music, if you will recall your own experience, you will know that the sweetest sounds that you hear are not musical sounds. If in the night you wake from a troubled dream, child as you are, affrighted and trembling, the sweetest of all Beethoven's music below would not be so comforting as to hear your father clear his voice—*h-e-m*—in the room adjoining. You turn over, and feel that you are at home. And so, a walk in the entry, or even a cough in grandmother's room, is so surrounded with sweet associations of home, that no formulated musical sounds are half so sweet as are these incidental and very homely sounds. And the opening and shutting of the door at the right hour is one of the musical sounds of home.

All day long the father strives in the office, in the store, in the shop, in the street, along the wharves, wherever his labor calls him; and the whole day has been full of care and wrangling. The head is hot, and the hand is weary, and the pulse is feverish; and as the day draws on, the busy man prepares at last for home.

If he is wise, he will leave his care behind him. Let the dead bury their dead. Leave your calculations at the desk. Leave your anxieties in your store. Never take them into the street, nor bring them home.

The man draws near his dwelling. The door opens to his touch. The children hear it. The elder ones run. The young prattler, mother-borne, gets there first—quicker than the nimblest. Now, how his heart rejoices! Every wrinkle is rubbed out. He looks around with a sense of grateful rest, and thanks God that the sound of that shutting door was the last echo of the thunder of care and trouble. That is outside, and he is at home, with her that he loves best, and with those that are dearest to him. That door opened to let him in

to love and peace and joy; it shut to keep out the turbulence of the quarrelsome world, and the influence of grinding business.

Now, is there any likeness in this to Christ Jesus? Is there any such access to Christ Jesus as may be compared to a man's experience when he repairs to his home, and, opening the door, has the full sweet welcome, and, shutting it, exiles all that disturbs and all that creates discord? "Behold, I am the door," says Christ; as if he were a householder. Opening, you shall be within the circle of love. Shutting, you shall be protected against all turmoil and care. Perfect peace have they who put their trust in him. Joy and peace, that pass all understanding—such joy and peace as the world knows not—are to be found in Christ. My dear friends, there is a friendship in the Lord Jesus Christ which may be to us what the door of the household is to the most care-bestridden and bested of men. What the home, with all its sweet affections is to the troubled heart, that the Saviour is to those who know how to make use of him—not the Saviour didactically taught or controversially preached, but the Saviour discerned by a living and personal faith. There is such intercourse and welcome behind him as there is behind the shutting door. There is that in him which shall make every man, in the midst of the most tried and bestormed life, rest upon his bosom. Oh! if men could but find the Door, if they could but know what peace there is in Christ Jesus for them, I am sure they would not go so friendless, and harassed, and distressed.

Speak, ye that have proved it. Speak, mothers who have been sustained in the midst of troubles that rasped the soul to the very quick; who have been upborne under trials that seemed likely to break down heart and body. Testify that nothing but Christ's presence kept you, and that that did keep you in perfect peace. Speak, fathers, who have gone through the burden and heat of the world, and been tried. Hundreds, thousands there are, that could bear witness, "If it had not been for the secret evidence that I had of the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ, I never could have endured it." There are bereaved hearts and weeping eyes innumerable that need the refuge which you have found. O mothers! O fathers! that have put Christ to proof, and found him a welcome Door, behind which was peace and joy, speak, and confirm these facts. Let them not rest upon my saying. Let them be a joyful testimony scattered up and down through society.

Oh! that a man could say to his neighbor, who is overborne, "My friend, you are tried in your affairs; but if you had my Christ, how easy could you carry your burden!" Oh! that there were a natural and continuous testimony of men to the helpfulness of Christ. If, when a man in business is running after an indorser, another man

in business says to him, "I have found an indorser for you," how quickly the man goes with his papers for indorsement! But there is One that never broke, and never will break, who says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Of all blessings that are unused, there is none greater than the personal presence of the Lord Jesus Christ to those who are privileged to avail themselves of it.

2. Christ is a door for the petitioner. If the journal of the hearts of all petitioners who have made pilgrimages to the doors of rich men, men of influence, wise men, and men of skill, could be written, it would be more full of pathos than any equal strain in human literature. For, the best things are the things that are never written. The tumults of thought, the discriminations of feeling, the fluctuations of emotion, in delicate natures, no pen can reproduce. And yet how copious are they! Who can depict or imagine the solicitude with which one delicately reared, in the midst of abundance, but reduced, not by her own fault, to poverty—to more than poverty—to hardship—seeks aid that she may rescue from suffering and death her offspring? Imagine one who was an only child, brought up in affluence, and receiving whatever she needed, and knowing life, in the earlier parts of it, only by its roseate touches—imagine such a one with a sick child, and so poor that, though it needs the most delicate food, she can only give it the coarsest bread. She is obliged to drop from the best skill to the next best, and from the best remedies to the poorest. She knows that the sea-shore or the mountain would cure the child; but there is no bridge of gold that can carry the child's feet thither. She says, "If it was a rich man's child, it would live; but it is a poor man's child, and it must die." And then she thinks, "Oh! if I could but pick up the crumbs of that man's affluence, it would suffice." And though she can not beg, she can not stay at home to see her darling die. And, torn between delicacy on the one side, and affection on the other, between pride and maternal love, how does she go hesitating toward the door of the rich man, to ask for help. Her house is desolate. Her only child is now left alone. Love drives one way, and shame and fear the other. Now see her. Why has she gone by the unfamiliar place? Her heart fails. She can not go in. She stops again, for she can not give it up. And how often, when she stands, at last, before the door, does her trembling hand reach for the bell, and find it not! And when she does find the bell, with what a faint tinkling does it ring! And then, who can describe the waiting minutes, which seem to her hours? Now a muffled footstep, far in the hall, is heard by her fevered ear. Presently the door is opened. God be thanked! some courteous, pleasant-faced servant

stands there to ask her will, and sympathizes with all the aspect of sorrow which she bears, and with gentle treatment ushers her in. And scarcely has she seated herself before the benefactor, not reluctant, but prompt, and fatherly, and with sympathy both in eye and voice, comes—comes a human being to a human being—making her sorrow his own, as soon as he hears it; treating her with honor, though she be a suppliant; and not obliging her to fight the battle of charity, and wring out reluctant help, but pressing, with zeal, more upon her than she dreamed of receiving; and following her footsteps with his own visiting steps, to know her own real wants in her own house. And how does she, as the door closes upon her, turn and invoke blessings upon him! Surely, if there is any voice that will bring from heaven the choicest blessings of God, it is the voice of one whose heart overflows with gratitude under circumstances such as these.

But have there not been just such ones? Have there not been those who have gone to Christ for themselves, or for their children, with as little faith, with as many fears, with anguish unspeakable? And, or ever they knew it, the cloud was lifted; the bright way shone; the door was opened; the Christ was manifest; the bounty of heaven flooded their souls; not one care weighted them down.

My venerable friend\* who sits before me told me, if I mistake not, that Dr. John Mason went to his own front-door, one day, when a little colored slave girl, who afterward became an eminent Christian woman, had rung the bell; and that she said, in giving a narration of the fact, "I never should have had courage to tell him what I wanted, if, as he met me, he had not addressed me kindly, and said, 'Well, my dear, have you come to talk with me about the salvation of your soul?'" That was the very errand. He opened the door himself, and introduced the theme with such benignity and condescension that the trouble was over before she opened her lips.

I have often thought that so Christ meets those who need him, and come to him with solicitation. Or ever the petition is uttered, his arms are about their neck. Their hearts are witnesses that the petition is answered.

3. Christ is the Door for doubt, where it hides itself in certainty. There is no experience more dreary and more painful, to a noble nature, than that of doubt. There be many who look upon skepticism and doubt as though these were liberation; and they talk about "the liberty of reason." This may do for dry natures; it may do for persons who have no deep moral impulses; but I can imagine no purgatory more trying than for a person that is deep-hearted, full of affection, full of pride—not of circumstance, but of being,

\* Mr. Lewis Tappan.

of immortality—full of hope and yearning, and all of whose early life has revealed to him various truths, and various realms of truth—I can imagine no purgatory more trying than for such a one to find himself, from one cause or another, falling from the teachings of childhood—falling from faith. It is not hard to give up a single doctrine upon proof; but to give up realms of truth, to find one's self floating off from old foundations, and believing almost nothing, is the most trying thing which a deep and generous nature can experience in this world. Not to know what to believe; to believe to-day something, and to-morrow nothing; to wish you could believe; to go seeking truth and confirmation, now to this philosopher, now to this logician, now to this arguing preacher, now at this joyous meeting, and to return, after all, stripped and barren—oh! that is desolate. There is nothing so desolate as the state of doubt. I would rather have superstition. A superstitious believer is far better than a doubter. For, admitting that it is all a lie, and that superstition is dead—dead at the *root*—a man that is superstitious is like a tree that is covered with the greenness of mistletoe, not with leaves of its own. Mistletoe is prettier than nothing at all. A man who lives in doubt is like a tree that is without any mistletoe, and is dead from top to root. Mistletoe is not a good substitute for leaves; but it is a great deal better than dead wood.

I have sometimes thought that a doubter might well be compared to one lost in a blinding snow-storm. If any of you have had experience on our Western prairies, you know that here in this thickly settled and forest-clad country there is no match for the storms that take place there in winter. On the open prairie, one starts upon his journey, every landmark clear, and the way familiar. Little by little, as the hours pass on, a haze creeps down the horizon. The sun is gone, with a pale and watery farewell. Snow in scattered flakes begins to descend, and gradually increases. The road is soon whitened and obliterated. There are no fences, and nothing by which he can direct his course. He begins to be uncertain of the direction, and is alarmed. And with alarm comes exertion—which makes his case worse and worse. His course is devious and circuitous. He wanders round and round. His own very track is covered almost as soon as made. Often and often he is in the same place. He is moving in circuits, though he thinks himself to be going forward. He grows chilly and numb. Drowsiness steals over him. He thinks he will rest; though he knows that rest will be his death. He thinks he must sit down; yet he will not. And just as the struggle seems about to be decided against him, he discerns a light. It is faint, and somewhat distant; but it is enough. With faint resolution he follows it. And he stumbles, at last, headlong, as it were,

upon the door of the cottage which dimly appeared through the descending snow; and his very violence bursts it open; unable to sustain himself, he sinks down as one dead. And he is safe. The storm is behind him, and he has found rescue. Not by his own strength, not by his own wisdom, but simply by the protection which has come to him by chance, he is saved.

So there are men that have wandered in this world from church to church, from theory to theory, from doctrine to doctrine, from belief to belief, from belief to unbelief, and from unbelief to restless yearning, saying, at last, "Who will show us any good?" Round and round they wander, over their own paths undiscerned, until at last, well-nigh discouraged, they give up. But for all this, there comes the opening, at last, of a door through which streams the light of Christ Jesus. There comes an hour to many a doubting wanderer when Christ is presented to him so beauteous, so real, that he clasps him. And as one will not give up a dream that he has dreamed, so sweet was it to him, but frames it into a picture, and cherishes it in his memory, so men looking upon Christ, and doubting whether he be a reality or a vision, hold on to the brightness, the joy and the living power, of Christ Jesus, and thus are cured of all doubt.

Many men come to me to be argued out of doubt. I argue no man out of doubt. The supreme medicine is Christ Jesus. If there is any way in which you can get rid of doubt, it is by coming into Christ's presence, and taking hold of him. You need nothing more. The vitality of God's soul cures the diseases of man's soul. Every thought of God is medicinal. Every impulsion of God is curative. Every function of the divine mind brings health. And what men need, is, not more reasoning, nor more persuading, nor more showing, but more Christ. Love cures; and only love can cure.

4. Christ is a Door to those who in religion find unexpected joy and heart-riches. There be many who live in a plain way, unconscious that there are great treasures so near to them, and are brought unexpectedly into the full fruition of them. The inner experience of a Christian life, to many, is peculiarly glad and joyous. To others, it is rather a struggle. We are called to different problems, as it were. Some men are not so much called to joy as to the establishment of foundations for joy by and by; but some, who are harmoniously developed, and felicitously placed in life, are admitted at once into the full ministration of Christian joy. And they are to be priests unto others. As they begin higher up than others, more is to be expected of their beneficence.

A young man sees, in a laborious farmer's house—the house of a man of small means but immense industry—a daughter of marked

excellence. Her mother died early. She has been in the place of mother, early learning care and responsibility. She has worked early and late, almost without the thought of rest. The house is plain, and the rooms are plain; and, though there lurks in her the hidden appetite for beauty, save, it may be, some chance picture cut from a magazine, and rudely framed, on the mantel, there is nothing in all the house, or around it, except nature's handiwork, that satisfies her longing for aesthetic beauty. The man beholds. He hides his circumstances. He hires out, and toils in the field. And, seeing, in secrecy and in familiar scenes, the royalty of that which he believed or suspected, at last he woes and marries her. Still she knows him not; but a husband, to a loving heart, is a husband. And joyfully she goes with him. She goes to his home, not knowing what it is. They approach, and she marvels, with innocent wonder, at the beauty of that avenue; and still more marvels when he turns in. She looks doubtingly at him; for at the other end is a beautiful mansion, and friends are standing at the door. And, or ever she can ask a question, he presses her to his heart, and says, "This, darling, is our own home." She had thought to go with a laborer to another place of toil, and behold, she has married a rich man; and these fair grounds, this resplendent house, and this joyous greeting are for her. And what wonder, what surprise and gladness, all the more because of the contrast, will she have—till the novelty, at any rate, is worn off.

How many there are who go to Christ thinking they go to duty; who go to him as a man goes to toil; who go to him as one goes to a captain in battle; who go to him as one goes to a taskmaster; who go to him willing, earnest, expecting toil and suffering; who go to him saying, "I will take up thy cross;" and who find not only rest to their souls, but riches that they had not expected! No love ever rejoiced at the unexpected associations of love, as the human heart rejoices at the knowledge and experience which Christ gives it, as the Door is opened, and one goes through to the verity of faith.

5. One familiar aspect in the Bible, of the Door, is that of a refuge, where David speaks of God as being his tower, into which he runs, and is safe. He represents himself as having been overthrown in battle, and pursued, near to some guarded city, where the gate-man, seeing the soldiers scattered, opens it, and allows them to enter, and then closes it, and shuts out their pursuers. How many have had troubles pursue them like armed men, and run in to God, and been saved!

Or, as one is traveling, a fearful storm gathers; and he, amid the sounds of thunder, driving amain, speeds with all his might; and, just as the drops begin to descend, with an inexpressible sense of relief

and rescue, he enters the door, and is safe under the sheltering roof. So God is, to those that are pursued as by storms, a refuge from their troubles.

6. Christ is a Door for wanderers. The vagrant child who has made proof of the folly of his course—another prodigal (and happy are they who have not, in their household, or in the circle of their friends, some commentary on the exquisite parable of the Prodigal Son)—the child that has gone away, and done unworthily, and run through one circle of experience, would fain be cured. He hesitates; but at last he goes back to his home. Uncertain as to how his father will receive him, he stands at the door, waiting. When, taking courage, and ringing the bell, his father opens the door, he looks at him with surprise. He hears not a word. He feels the warm pressure of the surrounding arm. The child is home again, unspeakably repentant because unspeakably grateful.

Or, the child has gone honorably away from home, on a long voyage, for health, or for pleasure; and who can tell what thoughts and dreams he has of home? And on the sea, even in the midst of obnoxious sickness, one still has some comfort in thinking of home. And when, returning, one lands, how the hours linger! How no conveyance can carry him swiftly enough toward home! And when, at last, the village is reached, how with ecstatic excitement one draws near the door! And how sweet and blessed it is to be at home again!

But ah! all these are very poor instances. Children wander worse than that; when daughters wander from home, and from themselves, and from God, and from purity, and run through a giddy and brief career, until, shattered in body, as before they were shattered in heart and mind, cast out and despised, and loathed by the wretches that have destroyed them, they lie down to die. But then they are found. For what shall measure a mother's love, who would go down to the gates of hell to save a daughter, and who brings back the miserable creature, and lays her in the very little room where she learned to say her prayers, and night and day watches over her, and teaches her feeble lips to pronounce again, and now with some hope, the adored name of the Saviour? And who shall tell what, to that child, is such a home? And what the open door of home is to the penitent, that Christ Jesus is to those who have gone from home. To the worst, to the wickedest, to the longest wandering, to those that are least worthy to return, and to those that bring back nothing but ruin, the Door is open; and Christ is the loving parent who receives them all.

I beseech you, in closing, not to mistake any other door for Christ. Sometimes we speak of the church as a door; and in some

sense it may be so regarded. If, however, studiously, and on purpose, we represent the church as the door of heaven, we take away the Saviour, and put in his place a man-built institution. The principle of the church is divine; but all church forms are absolute human inventions. There is no church on earth whose outward forms and ordinances are not purely of man's finding out—man's devices. They are none the worse for that; it is as God meant it should be; but it is only the principle that is divine. The need of association, the need of home-feeling in the midst of those who have hope in the Lord Jesus Christ, is divinely implanted. The mode of association, like the mode of housekeeping, is left to the liberty of all those who are sincerely followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet there be some who teach us that the earthly church, composed of human beings, surrounded with human devices, human ordinances, human governments, human systems, is the Door. *Never! Never!* Christ is the Door. No organization can take his place. None can represent him, even. We may make use of the church as we make use of a hotel when we are traveling home to see father and mother; but no landlord of any hotel shall tell me that he is my father, or my mother, or that his hotel is my home. Churches are God's hotels, where travelers put up for the night, as it were, and then speed on their way home. Christ is the one Door. All that pass through that Door are of the one church, and belong to him.

Let, then, no man put an ordinance in the place of the Saviour. Let no man put a doctrine in the place of faith and love. Let no man put the church, a human organization, in the place of the soul's only hope and rescue—Jesus, the beloved. Christ is the Door, and the only Door that is open to the soul of man. This is the Door, here upon earth, while yet we are stumbling in the way of duty, and striving to live aright.

But, blessed be his name! Christ is the Door, still more, of death. You know that gate which is spoken of in the Apocalypse—that gate more resplendent than ever cunning wit carved among men—the gate of pearl—one great pearl! It is called the gate of heaven, because it is the gate of death. And yet, men go wandering on the road, and wondering what the experience may be, and what the gate of issuing is. The opening of the pearly gate—that is dying. Going out into life—that is dying. Finding Christ, and being found of him in the moment when, the body dropping its vail from before the eye, and the spiritual sense opening, we can take hold of the great realities, and the only realities above us—that is dying. Christ is the Door out of life. As he has been the Door of faith and love in life, so he is the Door of exit. The coming of the Son of Man for his own is death. And when men are death-struck, they are death-

called; and when men are death-called, they are God-called; and when they are God-called, they are Christ-found. And as we have had Christ in life, we are to have him in dying. Through him we shall die valiantly. And he is the Door to men. He is the blessed Door of reception; and he shall stand for all those that have put their faith in him, for all those that have trusted him, in that great invisible world, when, utter strangers, we shall find ourselves well-known—nay, shall know even as we are known. There we shall find ourselves; there we shall find our children; there we shall find our most honored companions; there we shall find our best love; there we shall find our souls' life; there, with God, we shall rest from temptation, from unmanly defection; and our every aspiration shall be fulfilled, and our joy shall be completed in over-measure forever and ever.

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#### PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

THOU ever-blessed and eternal God, we thank thee for the revelation which thou hast made of thyself, far down through ranks of being. Thou hast been pleased to reach unto us. Not below ~~as~~ shines the light of truth and knowledge. We, brought up, at last have met the light in our sphere. We are taught of thee and of ourselves. We are pointed to the bright and blessed immortality beyond. All our sorrows are assuaged by its promises. All our joys are quickened in its glory. But thou, O God! by thy living presence, by thy sympathy, by thy helpfulness, by the inspiration of the Divine Spirit, dost chiefly help; for it is what we receive, it is what thou dost help us to do, and not what we work out by our own thought, nor what nature inspires, that makes us strong, and wise, and rich. We rejoice in thy Fatherhood. We rejoice in the benignity of thy government. Nature is full of thunders and threats; and the law, everywhere, under our feet, and in our bodies, and in the world which we inhabit, pursues every transgressor. The law of the soul, and the law of the mind, and the law of the flesh, work together for perpetual punishment; and we are under perpetual condemnation. But already, and all the time, from thee comes the blessed word, "I have found a ransom." From thee is remission and help. Thou dost set us free from the penalties which we are incurring from day to day. For thou knowest that what nature could not do thou canst; that what nature will not do thou wilt. And thou art healing, and wilt heal, by that which thou art in thyself. By thy soul upon our soul; by the medicine of thy thought upon our distempered thought; by thy love upon our imperfect and impure love, thou wilt heal us. Thou wilt augment in us the sum of manhood. Thou wilt lift us further and further up above the flesh, and the passions thereof, into a nobler and serener manhood, where is liberty; where is communion; where we ourselves are in our blessed and full estate; and where only we can find ourselves. And for this new and higher birth, for this recreation, for this spiritual manhood in Christ Jesus, how shall we enough thank thee? Oh! that men might see the precious heritage that they are casting away, or neglecting! Oh! that men might rise out of their sloth and their slumbers, out of the besetments of temptation and pleasure

in this world, and that they might come to their own selves, with repentance and sorrow for the past, and with Christian wisdom and purpose for the future! Oh! that they might begin that life by which they shall hold communion with thee, and have joy and peace unspeakable and full of glory!

Suffer none to be tempted more than they are able to bear. Suffer none to be swept away by under-currents. Suffer none to be corrupted within, while the form of morality and beauty is perfect without—*apples of Sodom, beautiful without, and ashes within*. Suffer none, we beseech of thee, with vain procrastination, with conceits of their own excellence, and pride therein, to waste time and growth in manhood. Though it be late for some, we beseech of thee that thou wilt bring them, in the very autumn of their days, into a better way. May those that are in the midst of life gird themselves anew with the strength which is from thee. May all that are in the heat and burden of the day have ministered to them this higher and better strength which nature knows not.

And we beseech of thee, O Lord God! that thou wilt comfort those in our presence who are most needy of comfort. Look after those that are most perplexed, after those that are harrowed by care, and after those that suffer anxiety. Look after those, we beseech of thee, to strengthen them, upon whom the yoke bears hard, and the burden presses with downward weight.

O Lord! thou hast made promises to all that put their trust in thee, that thou wouldst renew their strength. Be gracious, and fulfill thy promises to many to-day. Cleanse those whose hearts have come up hither laden with trouble. Comfort those that are as shrubs, when rains have fallen, every leaf weeping. Shake them, that every leaf may cast off its tears, and that only refreshment may come from the down-sweeping storm upon them.

We beseech of thee that those who are cast about, and tried, and know not which way to go, may yet, though there may not be open before them the way of outward prosperity, have an anchor-ground in thee. May they no longer be strangers. May they be children brought home to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Comfort any that are feeble. Be with any that are sick, and console them. And if long patience is required, in thy providence, for long-continued infirmities of sin, grant that they may have that patience, and that it may have its perfect work. Prepare for death those who are to depart, and prepare for life those who are passing from sickness to health. And grant that none of these outward things, none of the dealings of God, through nature, with the flesh, may separate between the soul and thee. May men not murmur nor complain. May they not look at the narrowness of their lot here, for whom is reserved the blessings of their Father's house. And grant that none may envy others, and pine at the prosperity of men round about them. May they be content to stand where the dear Lord has put them, and fulfill the office that he needs some one to fulfill. May none proudly swell, and ask why he should suffer. Shall the disciple be greater than his Lord? If thou didst go down to the lowest and the least, and didst cheerfully walk the bottom way, to the very ignominy of death, shall any refuse to follow thee—thou pure and spotless, they stained with sin; thou bearing others' trouble, they bearing their own transgressions?

Rebuke pride. Rebuke every unreasonable and wicked disposition of our hearts. And grant, O Lord our God! that we may be grateful every day, and content every day; that we may become meek, and gentle, and hopeful, and truthful, and loving, knowing that the time can not be far away, but that the gate is already ajar, and is soon to be opened. It is opened for one and another, and they fly thither from the winter storm, and are safe. For others still it will be opened, and for us. And may we not be discontented. Already come within

sight of it, almost within sound of the joys behind the gate, grant that we may be content. Oh! let us not cast away now, vilely, our hope or our confidence; and may we lean more heavily than ever upon thee, for all the earth can not burden the omnipotence of thine arm. Thou that bearest up the universe—may we lean upon thee wholly. May we cast our burdens and our cares upon thee, and walk careless, since God cares for us.

Bless us, we beseech of thee, in the further services of the day. Remember the Sabbath-schools under the charge of this church. Remember the superintendents, the officers, the teachers, and the children. And we pray that the dissemination of the truth may be perpetually a life-giving work. Accept our thanks for the great good already done. The fields that open are almost beyond employment; and grant that more and more may be stirred up to give their time and wisdom and hearts' treasure for those that are needy.

And we pray that thy kingdom may come everywhere, and that thy will may be done throughout all the earth. And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son, and Spirit. *Amen.*

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### PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

GRANT unto us, O Lord our God! that light of faith by which we shall discern thee in every thing. Art not thou the Tree of life to us? Dost thou not give shadows as the trees do? But when winter comes, then thou art not the tree that with shadow brings chill. Thou art the very sun. Thou art our warmth and our light. Thou art, O Lord! our food. The bread whose wheat, crushed and ground for us, is made into sustenance and life—that art thou. Thou art our rest and our home. A yoke and a burden thou art; and yet bearing thy yoke and thy burden, we find that full harvests follow our plowing and our toil, and we sit in the midst of unexpected abundance. When we are faint, thou art the water of life to comfort us. Thou art our star, shining in the darkness, and telling us the way when we are lost. Though we can not see what it is, we follow its light without questioning, and are rescued. Thou art our home; and the door leading into it thou art. Thou art all in all!

We thank thee for the fullness of thy offices; for the wonder of thy love. Some faint knowledge of this we have in our own feelings toward our children. What is there that we do not desire for them? What is there that we do not bear for them? What is there that we do not feel for them? What is there in their well-doing that does not bring to us exquisite gladness and joy? But we are dull, and dumb, and selfish, and poor, and do not know how to be good.

What is this feeling when exalted into the infinite realms of divine Fatherhood? Oh! what are thy desires and yearnings for us? Oh! what a tide must that soul-tide be which draws us toward thee! O Lord God! grant that we may have a more worthy and cheering and comforting sense of thy Fatherhood, and of the blessedness of thy love for us. May we not think it strange that one so great and good should think of us; for what greatness is there in the parent that despises the helplessness of the infant child? We are thy children; and we did not make ourselves; thou didst create us, and the world in which we dwell is thy world; and the providences and experiences therein are thy providences and experiences. O Lord! thou dost love us, and thou dost care for us, and thou art sheltering us and protecting us, and thou art, by joy, and by sorrow, which is better than joy, preparing us for an entrance into thine heavenly kingdom.

Oh! let us not throw away this faith. Let us not come short of this blessed realization. May we understand thee, accept thee, and follow thy laws confidently, and rejoice here, and rejoice forever with thee. And to thy name shall be the praise in heaven. When we see thee face to face, when we see thee as thou art, when all that are dearest to us are round about thee, then thou shalt be the *Chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely.* Then we will cast our crowns at thy feet, and say, Not unto us, not unto us, but to thy name, shall be the praise of our salvation, forever and forever. *Amen.*

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